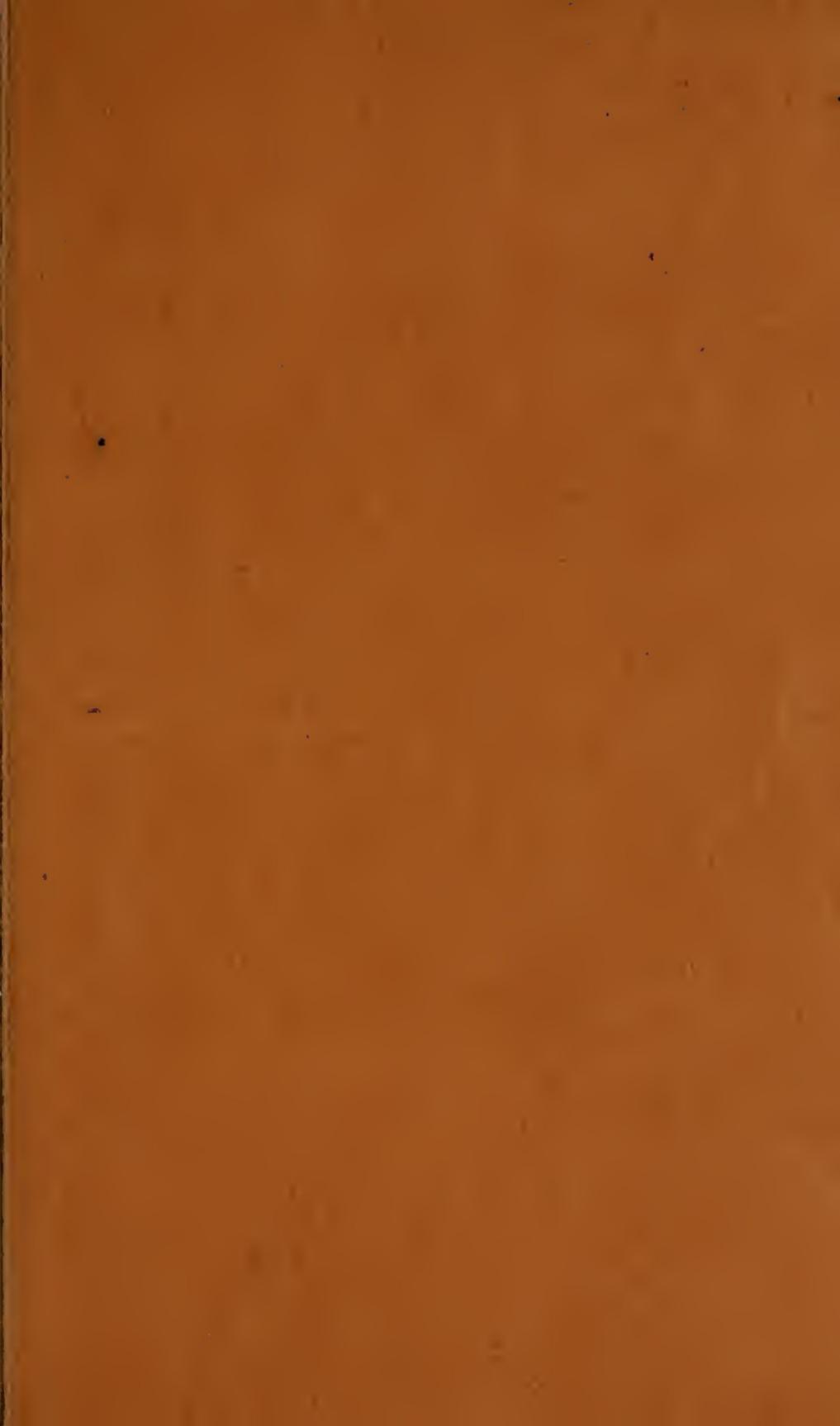






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INFANT BAPTISM,

FOUNDED UPON

SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY.

BY

S. P. LOWE, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "BISHOP ULPHILA AND HIS GOTHIC VERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES;"
EDITOR AND ANNOTATOR OF DR. OLSHAUSEN'S "COMMENTARY
ON THE GOSPELS," ETC., ETC.

"Baptise *all* nations."—MATT. XXVIII. 19.

"Preach the gospel to *every* creature."—MARK XVI. 15.

"I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins."—NICENE CREED.

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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND

CHARLES JAMES, LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES,

IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS MANY CHRISTIAN VIRTUES,

ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E.

THERE are few moments or events in the life of the faithful soldier of Christ, which furnish him with so much matter for serious reflection, consolation, and deep gratitude, as that brief act, and holy sacrament, by which he is received into communion with a crucified and glorified Saviour,—that sacrament with which his pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem commences on earth, in the name of Him who is the Head of his Church, the ever-blessed Jesus. Indeed, there is hardly a subject of greater moment and interest to the inquirer, in the sphere of Christian knowledge, than Holy Baptism, but more especially *Infant Baptism*; the subject which I purpose, with the aid of ALMIGHTY GOD, to inquire into in the course of the following pages. For although every word and precept of our Lord ought at all times to engage our attention, and furnish us with motives of the highest order for a due examination into what we are as Christians, and into what we ought to be as such, so as to become worthy of Him whose name we bear, whose mark is indelibly impressed on our brow, and under whose banner we profess to fight—yet, I honestly confess, that Holy Baptism and its mysteries, wherewith we were baptized when as yet mere infants, ought to be paramount in our thoughts for the foregoing reasons, and for those to be dwelt upon hereafter.

But there is another ground, and which I wish to mention at the very outset, why, I think, we ought particularly at

this moment to endeavour to make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with this kind of baptism, and which is briefly this. There seems to prevail a doubt in some quarters as to the efficacy, and hence the necessity and scriptural nature of it; the consequence of which is, that men think but lightly of it, and thus overlook the mighty results accruing from it. To all this, however, I answer, with the Catholic Church of Christ, that our children not only ought to be baptized, but that, having a right to it, they *must* be baptized. Indeed, it is the sacred and bounden duty of every Christian parent to have their infants baptized, with which God, in his inscrutable wisdom and mercy, has seen fit to bless them; and this for the reasons contained in the teaching and the Divine Spirit of the gospel, which it will be my endeavour to point out in as concise and clear a manner as I can, in the course of the following remarks.

INFANT BAPTISM.

INFANT BAPTISM I conceive to be founded upon a fourfold ground.

First, infants require it.

Secondly, they, more than adults, are fit subjects for it.

Thirdly, our blessed Lord commands it.

Fourthly, the nature of Divine grace calls for it.

First, then, infants require to be baptized. As the whole of my argument is based upon Scripture, I must refer the reader for a moment to the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Mark, and to the thirtieth and the two following verses, where we read, “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”

“And they brought young children unto him, that he should touch them.” Such are the words which arrest first our attention on perusing the passage just quoted. From them we are led to infer that the persons who brought the *young children* to our Lord, *that he should touch them*, were their mothers, or some other *female* relatives and friends. But whoever they were that brought them to our Lord, one thing is evident, namely, they did so, because they thought the children required the *communion and grace of our Lord*, and, as a consequence, promised themselves from such “touching” a blessed effect upon the moral, or rather spiritual and physical, life of their offspring. And in this respect—if our inference

be correct, they were undoubtedly right. This being admitted, I ask, whether such necessity exists no longer with regard to our own children? Were they altogether innocent or spotless beings, or *holy angels*, as some persons vainly and absurdly imagine them to be, we might be willing to grant it; or, if in holy baptism there no longer took place any "touching" of the infants by Jesus Christ; if this sacrament were but an empty and unmeaning ceremony, a purely outward solemn act of dedication to Christianity, or had been simply the fruit of faith, we could easily agree with those who see no occasion for, and are, in consequence, opposed to it. Such, however, is not the case. Our children, according to Holy Writ, which is confirmed by daily experience, are like grown-up persons, sinful creatures, conceived and born in sin;* they are by nature the children of wrath.† "That which is born of the flesh," says our blessed Lord, "is flesh."‡ The words of St. Paul, who says, "There is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"§ applies to them as well as to persons of a more advanced period of life. They stand in need of the one Mediator, Jesus Christ, and of a communion with him, as much as grown-up individuals; and it is only through him that they can become partakers of the grace of God, and of everlasting life in and with him. Now, Holy Baptism, according to the teaching of Scripture and of our own Church, is a sacrament; that is, "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace;"|| an institution of our Lord, upon which rests this grace, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which man is baptized and received into the true communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and by which salvation and life, forgiveness of sin, and adoption by God, hope, and eternal bliss; in short, the redemption through Christ, are insured and sealed to him. "They that receive Baptism rightly," says our Church elsewhere, "are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God."¶

* Ps. li. 5.

† Eph. ii. 3.

‡ John iii. 6.

§ Rom. iii. 22—24.

|| Catechism.

¶ Art. xxvii. of Baptism.

Hence we call it a mean of grace and of salvation. Hence St. Peter calls it a "covenant of a good conscience toward God."* Hence St. Paul calls it "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost."† And, finally, hence it is that our blessed Lord himself declares it to be the condition of salvation, when he says, "He that believeth, and is BAPTIZED, shall be saved."‡ After this, I ask, what right have we to deprive infants of that which Christ himself declares to be a means of salvation and everlasting bliss? Ought not this in itself to be an incentive to every Christian parent to obtain it for his child, through faith? The parent who could act otherwise, would be more blind, and have less feeling and love for his offspring, than those Jewish women who brought their young children to Jesus Christ, that he might graciously "touch" them. Or, can it be supposed for one moment, that God, who is the true Father of all children, both in heaven and on earth, would deprive the mere infant of that upon which, according to Christ, depends, among others, its salvation? On the contrary, because children, as sinful human beings, stand in need of the grace of God, through Christ, and because they can in Holy Baptism be dedicated to Almighty God, and be received into his grace, through the Redeemer, therefore must they be baptized. But, it might be said, Would not this be doing violence to little children? In answer to this, I would ask those who talk in this manner, whether it is not their endeavour to develop the mental powers of their offspring from their very earliest infancy? I would, moreover, ask them whether they are not anxious to bestow upon them, through the channels of a proper training and education, knowledge, talents, and acquirements? Finally, I would ask these persons whether they do not try to insure them not only a competency, but, if possible, affluence and wealth? And if this be the case, I then would once more ask them whether *they* do no violence to their offspring? No, say they, because mental powers, duly developed, education, knowledge, and wealth, are great goods; things without which we cannot do, which every one wishes, and, of necessity, *must* wish to possess. Now all this we willingly grant. But is not the grace of God, through

* 1 Pet. iii. 21.

† Titus iii. 5.

‡ Mark xvii. 16.

Christ, a by far greater good? And, as a consequence, must we not strive much rather to obtain *it*, than aught else, for our offspring? Hence, by allowing infants to acquire these things, violence is here altogether out of the question, inasmuch as our motive is, and only can be, the purest love and benevolence. And if, after their having been baptized, we should have the misfortune to see our children in an advanced state of life turn Jews, Mahomedans, Pagans, or Infidels, what is to prevent them, even *then*, from doing so? Should they ever fall so low—should they ever betray the sacred cause of their Divine Master, this melancholy and wretched freedom of choice would remain to them unscathed, in spite of their baptism.

But, to prevent so calamitous an event, and in order that they might not be robbed of the grace of God bestowed upon, and ensured to, them in baptism, by fraud and the seductions of sin; but that they, on the contrary, might grow up in communion with Christ, both in heart and faith; a communion, the foundation of which was laid in Holy Baptism, and upon which, indeed, depends the blessing emanating from it, children must be brought up in the spirit, discipline, fear, and correction of the Lord; in other words, they require a Christian training—a gospel education. And of this, too, Holy Baptism is the beginning and main source. For, as long as the child is unbaptized, it is not, and cannot be regarded as actually received into the covenant with God; it does not belong, as yet, to a religious community; it has not, as yet, become a member of the Church of Christ, which is, so to speak, the sphere of action of the holy Spirit of God. It may, indeed, enjoy the privilege of hearing of the grace of God through Christ; but it has not as yet received an assurance of it for its own person. It may be brought up as a child destined to become, at some future period, a Christian—a child of God; but it is not brought up *actually as such*—that is, as a *Christian*, as a *child of God*; which makes a great difference. The baptized child, on the other hand, is henceforth everywhere under the blessed influence of the Spirit of God, and of those means of grace which are offered in Christ's Catholic Church. As soon as the child has attained consciousness and mature age, it appears, in its own eyes, and in the eyes of others, as the consecrated property of the Lord. Henceforth it is no longer bound to look

forward for those gifts of grace which it has as yet to receive, but it is bound to look back to such, which, without its own merits, it has received already. It must, therefore, be moved and actuated, not only by a hope and desire for future mercies, but by a heartfelt gratitude and love for past ones. These, indeed, are the real elements of all gospel education, the main powers of everything truly good. Were Infant Baptism ever to give way, the main pillars of these would give way too. A new species of Paganism, a purely lawful discipline; a natural, worldly, and selfish mock-education, would then obtain still more—and more powerfully too—the upper hand, than it has unfortunately obtained already. The Spirit of God would have to leave earth, and make room for the spirit of the world; and poor humanity thus fallen, would become an easy prey to the powers which seek his utter ruin. It is for this reason, then, that Infants must be baptized. The welfare of their immortal souls, these spiritual specks in the ether of the invisible world, imperatively demands it.

This brings us to the consideration of another point of our argument, namely,

Secondly, that Infants, more than adults, are fit subjects for Baptism.

But are Infants fit subjects for Baptism? This is another of those questions frequently asked by those who think lightly of, and are opposed to, Infant Baptism. This question, however, or something similar to it, it would appear, caused doubts in the minds of the very disciples themselves, when the young children were brought to Jesus that he should touch them. For "the disciples," we read further, "rebuked those that brought them." The children brought to our Lord, it is evident, were as yet very young, since they had to be carried—since they had to be *brought* to him. The disciples, like a great many persons in the present day, took too much upon themselves; they presumed to know more than their blessed Master. They, no doubt, thought within themselves that these little folks, who lacked both a matured understanding and experience, had no business whatever with our Lord, and, therefore, would only needlessly trouble him. First—the disciples might think further—let these children grow up, and advance in the development of their mental and moral powers; let them first acquire knowledge, and, if possible, faith, and then they might come to him. Let them be

possessed, primarily, of these necessary attainments, and then it will be time enough for them to come to our Lord, that he might receive and *touch* them. However, God's ways are not man's ways. And hence we read, to our unspeakable comfort, in the passage immediately following, "But when Jesus saw it" (namely, how his disciples acted towards those that brought them), "he was much displeased;" in other words, he rebuked, by this display of his displeasure, the conceit and presumption of his disciples; proving thus by fact, that even these young and inexperienced children were not beneath his gracious reception and blessing. And thus, blessed be God, it is still. Our Infants, like those spoken of in the passage before us, have nothing to recommend them to the attention and regard of Almighty God. They can do nothing, they cannot earn anything; neither can they bring anything to our Lord. Faithful to their young and helpless state, all they can do is to cry and move about. And yet one thing—and this let us ever bear in mind—they can do. Although themselves wholly incapable of bestowing and doing whatever is great, good, and noble, they are not *incapable of receiving* both the one and the other. Do they not daily experience and enjoy the love which a mother only is capable of bestowing upon her offspring? Do they not daily receive tokens of paternal fidelity, good-will, and devotion? Are they insensible to the warmth and cheering rays of the sun, or the tokens and gifts of love of devoted and loving friends and relatives? May not riches be bestowed upon, or be bequeathed to, an infant, in its very cradle, without its being aware, in the least, of its possessions and privileges? May not some great and distinguished man, moved by its poor and forlorn state, have compassion on it, or, actuated by feelings of pleasure, adopt it as his own child? And if such, then, be the powers and inclinations of man, what is to prevent Almighty God, who abounds in unspeakable riches, as he abounds in infinite wisdom and love, from acting in a like manner? What is to prevent *Him* from bestowing upon the infant in the cradle his forgiving grace, or from pouring out upon it his Divine Spirit, and from adopting it as *His* child? Is it likely to be impossible to His Divine Majesty to bestow gifts upon an infant, while to our human weakness and inability so many things are possible? Far be from our mind so wicked and impious a thought. Corrupt, yea, wretched and lament-

ably-deficient or limited would our notions be of the power and goodness of God, and of the spiritual nature of man. Consider, but for one moment, the infant confined to the narrow space—the cradle. It does not comprehend a single word of what the voice of its affectionate mother whispers to it—and mothers, we all know, have a great deal to say to their infants—and yet, for the love which is expressed in them, its young spirit is already alive. Although otherwise insensible, yet for *it* it has an eye, an ear—it has sense.

Again. Consider yon plant. It is a flower—a creature without reason. Its master's hand has placed it in a dark and dismal room. And yet, involuntarily and instinctively, it turns its drooping head towards the cranny through which breaks the light of heaven, and thence imbibes its cheerful rays. And is the immortal spirit of the infant, emanating from a beneficent Deity, to be deprived of the prerogative of being able to turn towards the Father of light, to receive from him the rays of Divine life, simply because its moral powers are not as yet fully developed? How often, alas! does the grown-up person receive from above a blessing into his heart, without comprehending, without feeling it? A passage, a word from the Book of Life, read or uttered within his hearing, becomes of importance to him without his, at first, so much even as understanding it! A faint, a vague notion of its actual fulness and power, is all he at first feels—is all that seems to pervade his being. But gradually its meaning steals upon him; the whole, as if by magic, becomes clear to him. And though indifferent and unmoved a little while ago, he now becomes thoughtful; his heart begins to show signs of a quickening faith; he believes; he utters songs of praise, of gratitude.

But still further let us pursue the words of divine inspiration which we have been considering, and we shall find that our adorable Redeemer, not satisfied with what he has just said, goes a step further. He not only teaches us that infants, like grown up persons, *are* fit subjects for his blessing; but, what is more, he gives us clearly to understand, that they are *much more so* than the latter, and that they have in this respect the advantage over them. “*Of such,*” says he, “*is the kingdom of God.* Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a *little child*, shall not enter therein.” Hence he informs his disciples that little

children, so far from being unfit for the reception of his blessing, are *ipso facto* the very subjects for it; and that the reverse was the case; namely, that infants have not first of all to become like unto them, in order to become fit for the reception of His Divine gifts, but rather that *they*, his disciples, have to become like unto them.* To the disciples, we may easily imagine, this announcement must have been very startling. And yet, when we come to inquire into it, we shall soon discover the supreme wisdom and justice of it. In infants, sin and the carnal affections are as yet undeveloped—they are dormant. In grown up persons, on the contrary, both are already developed. The one and the other, have, so to speak, grown up with them. They have struck deep root into their hearts, and become part of them. In them a thousand prejudices, worldly notions, and aspects, carnal inclinations, earthly thoughts and desires, form a chain of opposition to the kingdom of God; but above all is this the case with regard to their self-love, conceit, pride and self-confidence. Now, in the infant all these features are as yet imperfect. As it is in every other respect feeble, powerless, and in need of aid, so also is its young heart unsuspecting and without guile. It is of a softer element, of a more gentle and tender nature; and hence, also, it is more likely to be influenced by God's Holy Spirit, and His Kingdom. Our Saviour himself bears witness to it in the words—"Of such is the kingdom of God." After this, I would ask what right we have to deprive infants of that mean which leads to it, and which is Holy Baptism? If the Lord, in mercy, invite them to His house, is it for us to shut the door in their faces? Just as the children under the old dispensation received the seal of the covenant with God—circumcision, even so early as the eighth day after their birth, without their having any knowledge of it whatever, and without their being able to believe or vow anything for themselves; so ought in like manner our children to receive in the very first days of their existence, the better seal of the new covenant, the washing of regeneration. And this they may with equal, nay, with much greater right, seeing that the holy apostle, writing to the Christians of Corinth, declares, "Your children are holy;" † that is to say, they are dedicated and consecrated

* Matt. xviii. 3.

† 1 Cor. vii. 14.

to God. They belong into the covenant of grace, and unto Christ; first, because they are born of Christian parents; secondly, because they are from their very birth under the influence of the Christian faith, spirit, and life; and thirdly, because they grow upon a soil, and in an atmosphere which are replete with the powers of a higher world.

Our endeavour will next be to show—

Thirdly, that our blessed Lord commands infants to be baptized.

After what has been said, there cannot be any doubt but that it is our bounden duty to present our infants to the Lord in Baptism, and that in so doing, we do his holy will, and that they are graciously received by him, as a matter of course. Hence, when we pray with the priest in the beautiful language of our truly excellent and imitable Book of Common Prayer, saying, “We call upon thee for this infant, that he coming to thy Holy Baptism, may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration. Receive him, O Lord, as thou hast promised by thy well-beloved Son, saying, Ask, and ye shall have,” etc. Or when we say, “Give thy Holy Spirit to this infant, that he may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation,” etc.,* we may rest assured that God is well pleased, and that He will not refuse to hear our humble prayer, more especially, since He has expressly declared, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,” † and did not refuse to receive those infants that were brought to him, but regarded with displeasure those who would prevent them from coming to the Saviour of the world. But, that we may learn that such is his express commandment, let us proceed in the passage before us, where we read further, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.” Here is an express declaration and sure testimony against the narrow view adopted by some persons, and which is, as though the blessing of Almighty God depended entirely upon the understanding of a more advanced age. Here is a declaration, which being clear and decisive, cannot be twisted and perverted to suit one-sided and narrow-minded views. Neither can its meaning be limited to some particular mean of grace only; as, for example, to instruction, inasmuch as it embraces *all* the means of grace which help to identify us with Christ; the holy

* The “Public Baptism of Infants.”

† John vi. 37.

Eucharist among the rest, although the latter be a privilege of mature age only. But, say the opponents, the children spoken of in the gospel, assuredly were not baptized? Who says that they were? Yet, these men forget two things: first, that the infants here spoken of received *more* than the baptism of those days could confer upon them; that Christ by taking them up in his arms, and by blessing them, did to them personally and visibly, what he does to our infants in the present day invisibly, and in a yet greater measure, in Holy Baptism. And secondly, that Christian baptism had not as yet been instituted, and could not therefore, be administered. There was indeed a baptism, namely, that of John the Baptist, a continuation of which was, the baptism as administered by the disciples of our Lord—for he himself did not baptize.* But this Baptism, which was only a preparatory one, and, moreover, made ready, or paved the way for the Christian one, differs essentially so much from it, that according to the Acts of the Apostles, † the disciples at Ephesus, who had received the baptism of John, were re-baptized, that is, they were baptized in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and it was then only that the Holy Ghost descended upon them. Hence the former, i.e., the baptism of John, is called the baptism of *repentance*—βάπτισμα τῆς μετάστασις. Thence it is, likewise, that St. John says, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.”‡ And Christ himself says, “John truly baptized you with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”§ The higher degree of baptism, the baptism determined upon for all nations and times, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, the washing of regeneration, was only instituted by our blessed Lord himself towards the end of his ministry and sojourn upon earth. Indeed, it could only be instituted after the work of redemption had been accomplished, and only be administered after the Holy Ghost had been poured out upon the apostles. And as for these apostles, and the first disciples chosen by Christ, we do not find mention made any where that they had received the washing of Christian baptism. And why not? Because their being chosen by our Lord himself, his blessed influence, his word

* Jahn iv. 2. † Acts xix. 1—6. ‡ Matt. iii. 11. § Acts i. 5.

addressed to them, and the pouring out of his Spirit upon them, had imparted to them those blessings, which are given to us in *Baptism*. They no longer required it. With us, however, the case is different. Holy Baptism, with us, makes up for the absence of this *visible* communion, choice, and influence. In it, Christ imparts to us invisibly that blessing, which the little children spoken of in the gospel, had the privilege and unspeakable felicity of receiving by the *visible* laying on of his hands. Hence, I verily believe, that had the mothers of these infants demanded for them Baptism, in addition to the by far greater favour already conferred upon them, namely, the communion with, and the laying on of hands, and the blessing by, our Lord, it would not have been refused them. And he who is to receive all this according to the commandment of our Saviour, must necessarily receive likewise the reparation for it—*holy Baptism*.

With the words of our Lord quoted last, agree all the other passages in the New Testament. Thus, he commands, in St. Matthew, “Baptize all nations.”* And hence, when the opponents of Infant Baptism ask, But where do we find it commanded that *infants* should be baptized, may we not fairly ask in return, But where do we find it commanded that *young men and young women, and grown up persons generally*, should be baptized? All our Lord says, is, simply, “Baptize *all nations*;” and if so, what right have we to exclude infants from “all nations?” Our Lord in like manner says elsewhere, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to *every creature*.”† I therefore ask every reasonable man, do our infants not belong to the class of *reasonable creatures*? and if not, at what time of their life are they likely to belong to it? The kingdom of heaven, I would further ask, must it not be brought near to them as well as to grown up persons? And the gospel too, must it not be preached to them likewise, that they may not, perchance, leave this world without having tasted of its blessings? Now, the gospel may be preached, not only in word and doctrine, history and parables, but by example and practice, by works and acts. Indeed, this kind of preaching is on the whole very powerful, and practicable even there where the former finds no room, just—to keep to the simile—as the eye of the devoted mother preaches to her in-

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

† Mark xvi. 15.

fant, long before it is capable of being properly instructed. If, then, according to the will of our Lord, the gospel *must* be preached to *every creature*, I ask—does there exist any other mean whereby this may be effected, with regard to even the merest babe, and whereby the will of our Saviour may be accomplished even in infants, than by Holy Baptism alone? Baptism, therefore, is fitly called the *visible* word, in contradistinction from the *audible*. But how is it—and this I think I may fairly ask—that we, on the contrary, find nowhere in Scripture a decided commandment *not* to baptize infants, or to baptize the children of Christians then only when they are grown up and believe? Our opponents of course, will say, But is it not written, “*He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved?*” * This is one of the main passages—a kind of scriptural heavy artillery—advanced by some Christians, and to which they have invariably recourse whenever their favourite doctrine is in danger of being ridiculed, and to which they refer with a triumphant air—one worthy of a much better cause—in support of their unreasonable views. They are wrong, however, in spite of it, inasmuch as the passage just quoted, does by no means contain, or assert, what they pretend to find in it. They think that this passage indicates the order and process of time, of the two points or clauses mentioned. According to their view, there must be, first of all, faith, and then follows baptism. And, because infants cannot believe—that is, because they have no faith—therefore they cannot be baptized. They therefore pervert the words to this effect:—“*He who believes, him baptize, and he shall be saved.*” But the words of our Lord do not admit of so brilliant an interpretation. Their purport is altogether a very different one. However, supposing, for argument’s sake, that the words of our Lord *do* admit of this interpretation, the conclusion, after what has already been said—after the reasons and scriptural testimony I have advanced—would be as absurd as it would be, if we were to infer from the words of the holy apostle, that if any man would not work, neither should he eat †—that infants ought not to have any food, because they cannot work. But that we may learn the true purport and meaning of the passage in question, I would observe, that our blessed Lord, who is

* Mark xvi. 16.

† 2 Thess. iii. 10.

more merciful than man, in the words here cited simply points out the conditions upon which man may be saved ; and mentions faith first, because it is the main condition, and fruit, and object of Holy Baptism ; wherefore, the latter—that is, Baptism—is the mean, and seal of faith. However, how little our Lord thought of the *order* seen by the opponents of Infant Baptism, in the conditions he points out in the passage before us, appears evident from the addition he makes, “but he that believeth not, shall be damned.”* Here baptism is not mentioned at all : first—and this is greatly to our consolation—because if our infants, without our fault, die unbaptized, that we may know that not the want, but the negligence of, and disregard for, Baptism, renders our conduct damnable in the sight of God. And, secondly, because our Lord, in his infinite wisdom and omniscience, foresaw that many persons would be baptized who had no faith ; or, at least, who had not the right faith : and, therefore, lost again whatever little faith they had been possessed of. But, in order that there may exist no doubt upon our minds as to the precise meaning our Lord attaches to his words, let us reflect for a moment upon what he says elsewhere. In the gospel of St. John we find these words, “ Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.”† Here our Lord speaks, first, of the baptism by water as the seal and pledge of grace, and then follows the baptism by the Spirit, with a living faith and its fruits. Similar to this are the words our Lord uses in instituting the sacrament of holy Baptism. Here he says, “ Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ;”‡ which, properly interpreted, means, “ Go ye, therefore, and make all nations my disciples, by baptizing them in the name of the Father,” &c. For our Lord’s commandment to the apostles is, to *make all nations his disciples* : his words in the language of the Greek text, are, “ μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἐθνη,” and the means he points out to them in order to attain this end, are baptism AND teaching.

* Mark xvi. 16.

+ John iii. 5.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 19.

Some of our opponents would prove—and what is there they would not prove, if they *could* but do it?—from the first Epistle to the Corinthians,* that Baptism does not form an element in the making of disciples of Christ; and that it is impossible to do the latter by means of the former. In making this assertion, however, they evidently contradict our blessed Lord himself, who most decidedly includes Baptism in the making of disciples. They, moreover—acting upon certain passages in the New Testament †—endeavour otherwise to limit the view of the making of disciples. In this, as in other respects, they evidently confound the beginning with the end. The apostles, as every student of the Bible knows, were disciples of our Lord long before they possessed the true saving faith. They became apostles because Jesus Christ was graciously pleased to appoint them to that office; but the true and living faith they obtained by their willing adherence to him, the immediate consequence of which was their true conversion:

“But,” continue the same parties, “the apostles baptized grown-up persons *only*; the Scriptures, at least, make no express mention of the baptism of infants.” Of this we are not quite sure. Of course, from the circumstance that fathers and mothers of families, according to the Acts of the Apostles, were baptized, it would be difficult to prove that there were little children among them. This, however, is natural enough—as natural indeed as it is with our own missionaries, who, going among the benighted heathen to preach the gospel, first address themselves to the grown-up portion of the people, whom they baptize, inasmuch as a Christian community is as yet to be formed; whence it naturally follows that children, placed under the influence of the Spirit of Christ and a Christian life, must here be altogether out of the question. Nay, the very circumstance, that Infant Baptism was but gradually adopted—if we are to believe the assertions made by our opponents—and its validity, only after the lapse of so many centuries, admitted, must not at all surprise us, especially when we consider the many superstitious ideas which were in vogue concerning *adult Baptism*, whereby the latter was particularly benefited. Thus, for example, there existed the

* 1 Cor. i. 17,

† Luke xiv. 27; John viii. 31.

notion—or, shall we call it the delusion?—that Baptism had the magic power of blotting out once for all the sins committed previous to it; and that those committed after it, were not remitted. In like manner, the serious doubts that were entertained as to whether the faith professed by an individual, was really the right one, and as to whether it was of itself quite satisfactory. The result of this state of things was, that many persons deferred being baptized until almost the last moment of their existence, or until they began to feel the icy breath of remorseless death. How could the idea of Infant Baptism prosper under such untoward circumstances? But such indeed are the consequences of making Holy Baptism depend upon conversion and faith. It is with Baptism as it has been with the celebration of the Christian feasts, and with the development of the doctrines of Christ. The one and the other have been but gradually suffered to develop themselves from those Divine germs contained in Holy Writ, until they attained that maturity, precision, and form in which—blessed be God's holy name—we now behold them.

We were led to make the foregoing remarks by the assumption, that there is a foundation for the assertion made by the opponents of Infant Baptism, namely, that the Scriptures make no express mention of the baptism of infants. Unfortunately for them, however, it can be proved from the New Testament, that infants *were* baptized in the days of the apostles, and that the supposed silence of the word of God on this most important subject, is not at all founded in fact, as may be seen from the following passage: “The learned Dr. Wall (I here quote from the Rev. C. Wheatley’s able work, entitled ‘A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England,’) has sufficiently rescued a passage in the New Testament from the gloss of the moderns; and showed, both by comparing it with the other texts in Scripture, and from the interpretation of the ancients, that it cannot fairly be understood in any other sense than of the Baptism of Infants. The passage I mean is a text in St. Paul’s first epistle to the Corinthians,* ‘*Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy:*’ on which he shows from several places of the old Testament † (i.e., from the original texts, and the interpretation given of them by the learned

* Chap. vii. 14.

† Exod. xix. 10; Lev. vi. 27; 2 Sam. xi. 4.

Jews), that to *sanctify* or *make holy*, was a common expression among the Jews for *baptizing* or *washing*.* It is also plain from the New Testament, that the same expression is twice used by this same apostle in this same sense; viz., once in the epistle from whence this text is taken, † and once again in his epistle to the Ephesians. ‡ He also refers to a learned author to show, that it was a common phrase of the ancients, to say that an infant or other person was *sanctified*, or *made holy*, when they meant that he was baptized.§ Some instances of which he also gives himself, as they come in his way upon other occasions.|| And it is certain, that this sense of this place in St. Paul very much illustrates what goes before. The apostle was directing, that if any man or woman had a husband or wife that did not believe, they should not separate or part, if the unbelieving person was still willing to cohabit; the reason of which he says is, because the *unbelieving husband is sanctified*, or (as it is in the Greek, and as all commentators agree it should be translated), *an unbelieving husband has been sanctified by the wife*; i.e., it has often come to pass, that an unbelieving husband has been brought to the faith, and so to baptism, by his wife; and *an unbelieving wife has*, in the same sense, *been sanctified by her husband*. As a proof of which he observes in the close, ‘*Else would your children be unclean, but now are they holy*;’ i.e., if it were not so; or if the wickedness or infidelity of the unbelieving party did usually prevail, the children of such would generally be kept unbaptized, and so be unclean: but now, by the grace of God, we see a contrary effect; for they are generally baptized, and so become sanctified and holy. This exposition (as Dr. Wall observes) is so much the more probable, because there has been no other sense of those words yet given by expositors, but what is liable to much dispute: and that sense especially, which is given by our adversaries (viz., of legitimacy in opposition to bastardy), seems the most forced and far-fetched of all.”¶

This, I should think, ought to be conclusive, and refute the absurd notions of our opponents.

* Dr. Wall’s History of Infant Baptism, part 1, ch. 11.

† 1 Cor. vi. 11. ‡ Eph. v. 26.

§ Mr. Walker’s Modest Plea for Infant Baptism, ch. 29.

|| Dr. Wall, ut supra, and ch. 15, sec. 2; ch. 18, sec. 4; and ch. 19, sec. 19. See also his Defence of his History against Mr. Gale, p. 363, &c.

¶ Wheatley, ut supra, p. 323-4.

But the Antipædo-Baptists assert, finally, that the apostles baptized the truly faithful and converted *only*. If we must admit that such was their practice, it must be equally admitted, that this applies to but few cases; hence, as a general rule, this assertion is altogether incorrect. For, if we read attentively the account given of the first Christian Pentecost, when about three thousand souls were added to the Church, including Lydia, the seller of purple, and the jailor of Philippi,* we shall find that the apostles baptized these people after repenting of their sins, and a willingness to believe in Christ and his gospel. The true and saving faith was the immediate result, and developed itself in consequence of Baptism and the co-operation of the Spirit. Wherefore, St. Peter said on the day of Pentecost, "*Repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*"† How incorrect the above assertion is, may further be seen from the fact that persons, such as Ananias, Sapphira, Simon the sorcerer, and others had been baptized, whose subsequent life and conduct showed how much they needed the right faith.‡ We, too, baptize our infants, not *because* they *do* believe, but in order that they *might* believe. We baptize them even *before* the existence of the living faith, and *because* we believe that their young hearts are open for the reception of the Lord and his kingdom; in order that the former (i.e., faith) might thereby be created, and they themselves grow from their very dawn of life into a communion of heart and faith with their Lord and Master. Herein we follow the example of the blessed apostles. In Christian communities, infants ought to possess the advantage over the infants of pagans, which is, that they have not as yet to go over from a state of absolute heathenism, and a sinful natural life to Christianity, in order to come to the Lord; but that they are presented to, and grafted in, Him, as soon as they are born, and that they are, and grow from the very commencement under the blessed and beatifying influence of the Spirit of Christ.

I shall now, in the last place, prove—

Fourthly, that the nature of divine grace demands that infants should be baptized.

* Acts ii. and xvi.

† Acts ii. 38.

‡ Acts v. and viii.

The proceeding of the Church just pointed out, is based upon, and necessarily results from, the nature of divine grace in general, which is so faithfully pourtrayed in the passage of Holy Writ, forming the main foundation of our remarks. In it, we read, in conclusion, "And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

The children here spoken of, it is evident, had done nothing for our Lord, so as to deserve a reward at his hand. Faithful to their nature they could render him no service, neither—considering their young age and inexperience—could they have faith, or bind themselves to the performance of certain acts and duties. They were, therefore, in the opinion of the disciples justly undeserving of our Lord's notice. And yet, he took them up in his arms, the evangelist tells us, and blessed them. Acts such as this, are in just keeping with the character of the Deity in his dealings with mankind; and have ever been the way of divine grace towards the human family. It was not when men were most distinguished for their good, holy, or noble acts, that God gave them the first promise of future salvation; but it was when they were sunk low, when they were buried in sin and wretchedness that he made this merciful promise. He called Abraham from the very midst of idolatry, both as practised under his father's roof and elsewhere, that he might learn to believe on Him, and worship Him, and that his seed might become the people of God, and a blessing to mankind. Even in the very womb, God preferred Jacob to Esau, that he might become a vessel of His grace. To the children of Israel, who received him not, but who scoffed, abused, persecuted, and crucified him, the "Man of sorrows," the "meek and lowly Jesus" came that he might preserve through them a seed, and save the world. From among fishermen and publicans he chose his disciples, that they might see his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, believe on him, and be converted at a future period. To the zealous persecutor of the Church, to Saul of Tarsus, he revealed himself while on his way to Damascus, that he might learn to believe on him, and become a blessed instrument in his hands. In this and other ways the Divine grace and revelation everywhere proceeds or goes before human action and human ways. The former is the sun which calls forth and matures the latter. This grace, which

is wholly undeserved on our part, is freely bestowed upon us. It is universal ; it has no respect of person nor age.* It is a grace, the main object of which is to save mankind, and to make them come to the knowledge of the truth.† Its wonderful glory, excellence, and greatness are revealed almost nowhere in so strong and striking a manner as in Infant Baptism. From a knowledge of the former, the latter (i.e., Infant Baptism), according to the will of the Lord, under the guidance of his Spirit, has *proceeded*, and could not but do so ; while every dogma which makes Holy Baptism depend entirely upon the actions and emotions of the soul of man, and of his worthiness of it, misapprehends, degrades, and undervalues this grace. Infant Baptism, therefore, is not only admissible and necessary, but it is a progress made by the Church. It is Baptism developed to its fullest extent, and most complete as well as *most efficacious*.

For, as the blessing of the Lord must have followed the little children spoken of in the gospel, throughout their life, so, in like manner, does the *power* of Baptism follow us. Holy baptism, indeed, is but a short act, it is soon performed ; but its influence or effect reaches beyond the fleeting moments of man's earthly existence. It is with it, as it is with the act of birth, marriage, or compact between friends, and princes. From this brief act there arises a perfectly new and peculiar form of man's entire life, if, by his own misconduct he be not himself the cause of his ill success. The blessing of Holy Baptism follows us like a faithful friend, throughout every moment of our sojourn on earth. So, for example, in the hour of temptation. When the world allures us—when the flesh becomes exposed to a thousand unhallowed desires—when hand and foot are already prepared to commit some evil deed—our conscience, like a warning angel, whispers into our heart : “Thou art a baptized member of the Church of Christ, a consecrated vessel of the Lord. Beware lest thy sins appear against thee in the day of judgment !” And when hours of trial and sorrow come crowding upon us—when the waters of affliction almost go over our heads—when our sins appear in our eyes great beyond compass, and when our faith grows weak, and the goodness and

* Acts x. 34.

† 1 Tim. ii. 4.

mercy of God and our state of grace begin to appear to us doubtful—when the realization of Divine grace and hope forsake us—and of such hours there are many in the life of the righteous—the mere promises of the Word alone then are insufficient to raise our drooping spirits, because we are then incapable of understanding them ; adult Baptism, the result of a previous conversion, then avails us little, because the very doubts in the truth and purity of our motives, depress and deject us. But Infant Baptism, received *before* our conversion, the seal of the Divine counsel of grace, to save us in spite of our sins, weakness, and unworthiness ; this is a strong, undeniable, and cheering fact, which the bruised spirit eagerly seizes upon for its consolation, as the drowning man seizes the beam floating on the ruffled surface of the raging ocean, and which is destined to save him from death, and his concomitant, the grave. Resting upon it, the bruised spirit rises gradually to a childlike faith, trusting in a forgiving and merciful God and Father. Hence, whatever trial and affliction may befall man in life, he has one consolation—he has received Infant Baptism. And, though aware that he must die, still he hath the unspeakable comfort to know that he was baptized into the Catholic Church of Christ, when as yet but a helpless being—a mere infant.

It now remains for me to prove Infant Baptism from history, *i. e.*, from the writings of the most ancient Fathers. And here I cannot do better than return once more to the Rev. Charles Wheatley's excellent work, in which he expresses himself on this subject to the following effect :—

“ But though we could not be able to produce from Scripture any *express* mention of the Baptism of Infants, yet, when we descend to the writers of the next succeeding ages, we have all their testimonies unanimous on our side. And surely they must be allowed to be competent witnesses of what was done by the apostles themselves. They could tell whether themselves or their fathers were baptized in their infancy, or whether it was the apostles' doctrine or advice to stay till they were grown up to years of maturity. But now in none of these do we meet with anything that favours the opinion of our adversaries, but almost in all of them a direct confutation of their errors. In some of them we have express and direct mention of the practice of the Church in baptizing infants ; and even in those in whose way it does not come to

say anything as to the age when Baptism should be administered, we have frequent sentences from whence it may be inferred by way of implication. St. Clement, in the apostles' time, speaks of original sin as affecting infants; * if so, then Baptism is necessary to wash it away. Justin Martyr affirms, that Baptism is to us in the stead of circumcision; † from whence we may fairly conclude, that it ought to be administered to the same kind of persons. In another place, ‡ he mentions several persons, *who were disciples* (or made disciples) *to Christ whilst children*; which plainly intimates, that children may be made *disciples*, and consequently may be baptized. For the only objection of the Antipædo-Baptists against Infant Baptism is, their incapacity of being made *disciples*. Now here they may perceive, that if Justin rightly understood the word, *children* may be *disciples*. And it is worth observing, that the persons he here speaks of were said to be *sixty and seventy years old*; and therefore if they were *disciples*, and baptized when they were *children*, it follows they must be baptized even in the days of the apostles. But, to proceed: Irenæus, who lived but a little after Justin, reckons infants among those who were *born again of God*, § a phrase, which in most ecclesiastical writers, and especially in Irenæus, is generally used to signify that *regeneration* which is the effect of Baptism.|| And that this must be the sense of the word here, is plain, because infants are not capable of being born again in any other sense. Tertullian, again, a few years after him, speaks of Infant Baptism as the general practice of his time; though by the heretical notions which it is probable he had then imbibed, he thought the deferring of it was more profitable.¶ In the next century, Origen, in several places, expressly assures us, that *infants were baptized by the usage of the Church*.** And lastly, about

* Clem. Rom. Eph. i. ad Cor. cap. xvii.

† Dialog. cum. Tryph. p. 59, ed. Steph.

‡ Just. Martyr. Apol. i. prope ab initio.

§ Omnes enim venit per semetipsum salvare: omnes inquam qui per eum renascuntur in Deum; Infantes et Parvulos, et Pucros, et Juvenes, et Seniores. Iren. adv. Haeres. i. 2. c. 39.

|| See this proved at large in "Dr. Wall's History of Infant Baptism," part i., chap. 3.

¶ Tertul. de Bapt. c. 18.

** Orig. Hom. 8. in Lev. xii. xiii., part i., p. 90; Hom. 14. in Luc. part ii., p. 142, L.

the year 250 (which was about 150 years after the apostles), St. Cyprian, with sixty-six bishops in council with him, declared all unanimously, that none were to be hindered from Baptism and the grace of God : ‘ which rule,’ saith he, ‘ as it holds for all, so we think it more especially to be observed in reference to infants, and persons newly born.’ * The same might be shown from all the other fathers of the three first centuries, who all speak of it as a doctrine settled and established from the beginning of Christianity, without once questioning or opposing it—which certainly they would have done in some or other of their works, had they known it to have been an innovation, contrary to the doctrine or practice of the apostles.” †

A few words more, and I have done.

If I have succeeded in pointing out, upon scriptural and patristic grounds, both the power and necessity of Infant-Baptism, little does it matter whether its opponents approve or disapprove of it ; and still less if we are told, that by it the gates of the Church are thrown open to every degree of the impious and wicked rabble ; and that the house of God must, ere long, become a den of thieves, and a place of refuge for every outcast. For we know—and blessed be God’s holy name that we *do* know it—that the Church of Christ must embrace the whole human family, and that upon the field of the Church thus embracing the whole of mankind, the good seed must necessarily grow by the side of the tares until the harvest. ‡ On the other hand, that doctrine which would admit to Baptism the truly converted only, and then unite them into a Christian communion—such a cold and repulsive doctrine, I have no hesitation in saying, would soon incapacitate the Church of our Lord for that great, noble, and exalted office, and, indeed, very soon convert it into a small, bigotted, and uncharitable sectarian body. It would drive thousands, who as yet could and should be saved, into the world, and

* Cypr. Ep. 54. p. 158. This consultation was held, not to decide whether Infants were to be baptized (that they took for granted), but whether they might regularly be baptized before the eighth day ; upon which the resolution of the whole council was formed, that Baptism is to be denied to none that is born.

† Wheatley, *ut supra*, pp. 324—26.

‡ Matt. xiii. 24.

into a state of the most loathsome heathenism, and thus sever the last link which still binds them to Christ. Nay, more than this : such a doctrine, if faithful to itself, must, of necessity, create in the heart of its abettors, and of man generally, conceit, pride, self-deception, hypocrisy, and mock-holiness ; and must, in truth, in *this* manner, turn the house of God into a place of refuge for thieves and murderers of every description. It must transform it into a whitened sepulchre, full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

As little can it be matter of any consequence to us, considering the knowledge *we* have of the true nature of Holy Baptism, as to whether some persons, who lack a precise and thorough understanding of the most essential part of this sacrament, lay so great a stress upon the external and unessential—baptism by *immersion*. For, partly has the usual form of the Church of England—namely, that of affusion or sprinkling—already been in use in the earliest ages of the Christian era, at least, in cases of sickness, suffering, and old age ; and partly does it answer to the commandment contained in Holy Writ, in so far as the latter teaches us everywhere to regard Holy Baptism as a symbol of the mystical washing and purification ;* and, finally, partly because it is not the water which does it, but the word of God accompanying it, and the faith which trusteth to such word of God in the water. For the satisfaction of those, however, who advocate the former form of Baptism, I may briefly state that the Church of England sanctions—nay, she even commands—baptism by immersion, as may be seen from a rubric in her service appointed for the performance of this holy sacrament.

Let us, therefore, be watchful, and not suffer ourselves to be misled, nor lend an ear to the apparently plausible, yet, in truth, hollow and superficial, notions and teachings of those who are opposed to Infant Baptism, and think lightly of its efficacy. Hear the Church, which has taught for ages, and still teaches, the meaning and results of this great mystery, and abide by it.

Neither let us be deceived by those who pretend to know the word of God ; who are masters in quoting passages from it *ad libitum*, in support of their *un-scriptural* views of holy Baptism in general, and of Infant Baptism in particular ; for

* Eph. v. 26.

the passages thus cunningly selected, and seemingly supporting their views, if rightly interpreted, do nothing of the kind ; indeed, they are altogether against them. These people, to speak with a great divine of the Reformed Church, study the Scriptures according to their preconceived fancies and false belief. They first of all start a self-flattering opinion—one that pleases them well, and which, of course, appears to them good and right ; and, having succeeded so far, they now lay hold of the Scriptures, seeking for, and *picking out*, those passages which are best suited for *ornamenting* their vain and conceited ideas." But let us rather be thankful to Almighty God for the great mercy he has graciously shown unto us, even when we were as yet mere infants, in his holy Sacrament of Baptism. Let us, in our turn, show him our gratitude by believing on him more and more firmly ; by dedicating ourselves, daily and hourly, and in all sincerity and fidelity, to his service ; by becoming witnesses to his truth, in the eyes of our erring fellow-Christians, wherever it be necessary and useful ; and let us, although differing with them on this, and, perhaps, on many other saving truths of the doctrines of Christ's holy Catholic Church, show them forbearance, patience, and love. Let us always look upon ourselves as such as are baptized into the death of Christ, whose consolation and constant endeavour it is to imitate him in his death, and to become, through him, dead to the world, dead to temptation, and dead to sin ; that we may, like him, rise from the dead, and walk in newness of life, to the everlasting honour and glory of the TRIUNE God, who was, and is, and is to come.





